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DISCOURSE

Occasion'd by the

SMALL-POX and *PLAGUE*

Now reigning in

EUROPE.

BEING

The Substance of TWO SERMONS
Preach'd in *BRISTOL*.

By *STRICKLAND GOUGH*,
Minister of the Gospel there.

Tum tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet.

L O N D O N:

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DISCOURSE

Delivered by the

Rev. Mr. [Name] and [Name]

at [Location]

EUROPE.

BEING



THE SECOND VOLUME

BY [Name]

Author of the Gospel of [Name]

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EXODUS ix. 10, 11.

And they took Ashes of the Furnace, and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses sprinkled it up toward Heaven; and it became a Boil breaking forth with Blains upon Man and upon Beast. And the Magicians could not stand before Moses, because of the Boil: for the Boil was upon the Magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.

THIS Scripture is too applicable to the Case of this and some other Nations of *Europe*, to make any Apology for my fixing upon it at this time. We have a Distemper prevailing among us, which very much resembles that mention'd in my Text, wherewith God punish'd the People of *Egypt* in the Days and by the Hand of *Moses*. God grant we may not be harden'd under it, as *Pharaoh* is said to be in the Verse after my Text. Nor is God only visiting us with a Distemper actually spread among us, but he is shaking his Rod over us by a Plague which rages in no very far distant Part of the World; either of which, but much more both of 'em consider'd together, I could not but think a Providence which deserves we should take some Publick notice of it.

This then is the Occasion of my choosing these Words as the Subject of our present Meditations. And in discoursing upon them, I shall speak something,

First, Concerning the Plagues of *Egypt* in general, as they are describ'd in this and the adjacent Chapters.

2^{ly}, Concerning this Plague of the Boils and Blains in particular.

First, I shall speak something concerning the Plagues of *Egypt* in general; which you have describ'd in Chapters the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th of this Book. And what I would offer as Instructive to us at this Juncture, I shall deliver in a few Observations, which may tend a little to Awaken us to Serious Consideration. Many such Observations might indeed be rais'd from the several particular Plagues, mention'd in these Chapters, and the awful Circumstances that attended 'em. But my design is only to insist upon such, as arise more naturally from the general Collection of those Plagues, without going far into the several Particulars. Now there are Six Observations which I would raise and briefly consider from this History.

First, That God has a great variety of Ways and Means of punishing and shewing his Displeasure against a sinful People. I shall mention several of these Methods which are clear and plain in the Plagues describ'd in this Book.

1st, He can punish them in their most necessary Enjoyments. Thus he did in Three of the Plagues he sent upon this People. In one of 'em he turn'd Water into (a) Blood. There is scarce a more necessary Element for the Support and Refreshment of a People, than this of Water. But alas! how often is it abus'd by Drunkenness and Excess? And then God can, and sometimes do's

(a) Chap. 7. 19.

turn this most necessary Blessing into a dreadful Curse. The Water which was turn'd into Blood at this time, seems to be that of the River Nile, which Egypt was always famous for. Indeed 'tis the overflowing of this River which makes their Land fruitful, and supplies the Want of Rain, which is very scarce in that Part of the World. And the Egyptians had so great a Veneration for this River on the account of its Usefulness and Unknown Original, it's Rise being then undiscover'd, that they ador'd it as a God. Therefore did the true God justly punish 'em this Way. And thus if we set our Hearts upon, and too much admire our Earthly Blessings, 'tis a high Provocation to the Almighty, who is jealous of his Honour and will not give his Glory to another, to curse us in them. Thus also did he plague that People by a Swarm of Locusts, which came and devour'd every Herb of the Land, and all the Fruits; so that there was none left. (a) Thus also did he punish Egypt in the Plague of Murrain, which kill'd all their (b) Cattle: God has given not only the Herbs but the Cattle of the Field for the Sustenance of Mankind. But when these are abus'd by Luxury and Intemperance, and made Fuel for our Lusts, he can and will sometimes deprive us of 'em.

2dly, He can Punish a wicked People in their Dearest Relations. Children are undoubtedly a Great Blessing, and they are very Dear to such as have Humane Nature prevailing in 'em. And among all Children the First-Born are apt to be dearest to us, in as much as they are *the Beginning or First-Fruits of our Strength* (c). For which Reason it is pronounc'd as an awful Curse upon him who should build Jericho, that he should *lay the*

(a) Ch. 10. 15. (b) Ch. 9. 1, &c. (c) Deut. 21. 17.

foundation thereof in his First-Born (a) Now in these did an angry God plague and punish the wicked *Egyptians* (b). He threaten'd 'em with the Death of all their First-Born, as the last and foret of these Plagues; and we soon find it executed, so that the Eldest in every Family from the King down to the meanest Captive was struck Dead in a Night, and there was not a House where there was not one Dead. This should teach us to sit loose to our Dearest Relations, not to Idolize 'em, but to teach 'em the Fear of the Lord, and to carry it toward 'em so, that we may not Sin 'em away, nor provoke God to Deprive us of 'em. This indeed was a Just Punishment upon the *Egyptians*: They had Slain the Children of the *Hebrews*, and that not under a sudden Surprise, but by an express tho' cruel Order from the King himself; and now a Sin-revenging God, righteously slew theirs. And thus he may punish any other People when they sin against him. If they take too much Pride in their Sons and Daughters, lay too much stress upon the growing Hopes of their Families; He can cut off all the Branches of 'em, write 'em Childless, or deprive 'em of those who are to support their Names, as they vainly flatter themselves, when they are dead and gone.

3ly, He can punish us by such means, as seem to be the most contemptible. What can be more contemptible than Lice, and Flies, and Frogs, and the very Dust of the Earth? And yet all these were made a Plague to the *Egyptians* (c). We read That *the Frogs came up and cover'd the Land of Egypt* (d). We read also, That *the Dust was turned into Lice, which tormented both Man and Beast*. And (e) we read that *a grievous Swarm of Flies came into the House of Pharaoh and of all his Servants, and of*

(a) Jos. 6. 26. (b) See Ch. 11. 4. Ch. 12. 29. (c) Ch. 8. 6.
 (d) Ib. 17. (e) Ib. 24.

all the Egyptians, so that the whole Land was corrupted by it. This may seem a slight Sort of Affliction, but it was so heavy upon them, that *Pharaoh* earnestly intreated to be deliver'd from it. And what indeed cannot the meanest Creature do, to be a Torment to us, when it is in the Hand of God?

4^{thly}, He can punish us by a direct stroke from Heaven, as well as by the things of this World. And this way also he took to punish the *Egyptians*. We find, (a) *the Lord sent Thunder and Hail, and the Fire ran along upon the Ground; so that there was Hail and Fire mingled with the Hail very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the Land of Egypt, since it was a Nation.* And then after this, because they were still Impenitent, we find (b) a sorer Judgment inflicted; God sent a thick darkness, even such as might be felt three Days, and they saw not one another, neither did any rise from his place for three Days. How dreadful a Plague must this be, and here was the evident hand of God in it: If we are not reformed by ordinary Calamities, God can send extraordinary ones, and punish us yet seven times more for our Iniquities.

2^{dly}, Obs. That the merciful God sometimes uses repeated Methods, and waits a considerable time for the Reformation of a People, before he totally destroys 'em. It is plain that the *Egyptians* were a most sinful People: Their Iniquities had been filling up for many hundreds of years, before they were thus afflicted. It is not unlikely that they were as ridiculous in their Idolatry before, as they were after this time, when they worship'd Crocodiles, Leeks and Onions, Dogs, Oxen, Bulls, (c) &c. 'Tis certain they were gross Idolaters, yet God still forbore. And how long had they oppress'd the *Israelites* in a most barbarous manner?

(a) Ch. 9. 23, 24. (b) Ch. 10. 22, 23. (c) Vid. Juvenal. Sat. 15. per Tot.

no less than four hundred Years. And even now when God went about to chastise 'em, we find no less than ten Plagues inflicted, before they were drown'd in the *Red Sea*. Formerly in the days of *Joseph*, we read that they endur'd seven years Famine, which one would have thought should have deeply humbled 'em. It did not do it, yet God spar'd 'em some hundreds of years after that. And now that he was going to destroy 'em, he sent Plague upon Plague before he did it. It is observable also, that God gave notice of most of these Plagues or Judgments by the Mouth of *Moses*, before they came upon 'em. He warn'd them of what was coming upon 'em, to see if that would awaken 'em; and when they were inflicted, still they were removed, upon *Pharaoh's* intreating *Moses* to pray for 'em; tho' he made but deceitful Promises to let *Israel* go, and was only outwardly humbled at the time when he was afflicted; yet God presently turn'd away the Judgment. How mercifully do's he deal with the worst of Sinners, and how unwilling is he that any should perish? He waits and bears long, and tries all the Methods that are fit for him to try, to prevent their Ruine. He cries, *How shall I give thee up, How shall I deliver thee? My Repentings are kindled within me.*

But I observe again from this History,
 3dly, The unaccountable hardness of Sinners Hearts, and the dismal use they make of the Judgments of God. It is certain, that these Plagues were awful and uncommon, and enough to have soften'd any, that had not lost all Sense of God and Religion; and yet we find that they had a contrary effect upon this People. It is frequently said, that *Pharaoh's* Heart was harden'd under the Plagues which were inflicted upon him. Obdurate Wretch! who would not be soften'd by the severest Calamities that ever were inflicted, almost upon any Person or People: Sometimes indeed he pretended

tended to relent a little, but he never came to a true Repentance. As for the Magicians, they contributed to the disbelief of God's being concern'd in these things. These were regarded as some of the wisest Persons in the Kingdom of *Egypt*, as being the most Skilful in the Art of Magick or Divination, which was in the highest esteem among the *Caldeans* and *Egyptians*. But these pretendedly wise Men were now plung'd in the greatest Folly, they ap'd the Miracles which were wrought by *Moses*, and pretended to do as great things as himself: And thus they did what they could to harden *Pharaoh*, and all that were about him. At last a Confession was extorted out of the Mouths of these Instruments of Satan, and they could not but say, *This was the Finger of God*; (a) but that they truly repented, do's not at all appear. And as for the Body of the *Egyptians*, we are not told that they were really humbled, tho' at last some of 'em seem'd to shew some tenderness to the *Hebrews*, which they might do from natural Affection, or in order to get rid of 'em, or from the force of unavoidable Conviction; but many of 'em pursued them even to the *Red Sea*, and so were harden'd to their own Destruction. This is the worst sort of Judgment indeed, when a Judicial Hardness goes along with the outward Severities we feel from the Hand of Providence, and therefore it is justly describ'd as a plague upon Men's Hearts. (b) When we are soften'd and humbl'd under the Hand of God, 'tis a wonderful Mercy: But 'tis a dreadful Sign, when the Judgments of God are abroad in the Earth, and the Inhabitants of it do not learn Righteousness. Yet this alas, is frequently the case of the People of this World, *God speaks once, yea twice, yet Man perceiveth it not.*

(a) Chap. 2. 19. (b) 1 Kings 8. 38.

ably, Obf. That there is sometimes a fpecial Providence of God, watching over and preferving his People, in the Plagues which are inflicted upon the Wicked. It is not indeed to be always expected, that God will fave the Lives and the Comforts of every good Man in a time of publick Calamity. They do often contribute too much to the Heap of a Nation's Sins, and as they are Sinners, they may juftly be punifh'd along with the reft of the World. Nor is this inconsistent with the diftinguifhing Love of God towards them, feeing He will fupport them under their fevereft Afflictions, and at laft make up all to them in a better World. But yet it is not unusual with God, to make a Hedge about his beloved Children, to defend them from the Miferies which happen to others. To that purpofe he promifes, *The plague fhall not come nigh the Dwelling of fuch as make God their Refuge, and the moft High their Habitation ; That no evil fhall befall 'em, that God will deliver them from the noyſom Peftilence, fo that they fhall not be afraid of the Terror by Night, nor of the Arrow that flyeth by Day, nor of the Peftilence that walketh in Darknefs, nor of the Defttruction that wafteth at Noon-day, that a thouſand fhall fall at their Side, and ten thouſand at their Right-hand ; but it fhall not come nigh them, that he will cover them with his Feathers, and under his Wings fhall they truſt, and that he will give his Angels charge over them, to keep 'em in all their ways, Pf. 91. from ver. 1, to 11.* And this was the very caſe of God's People, now in the time of the Egyptian Plagues. Thus in the Plague of the Flies, when all Egypt was over-ſpread with 'em, God put a Diviſion between his People and Pharoah's People, and ſecur'd the Land of Goshen, fo that no ſwarm of Flies was there at all. (a) So in the Plague of Murrain, all the Cattle of Egypt dy'd, but of the Cattle of the Children of Iſrael dy'd not

(a) Ch. 8. 22.

one. (a) So in the Plague of Hail, (b) which smote all the Herbs and Trees of the Egyptians, yet in the Land of Goshen, where the Children of Israel were, there was no Hail. So in the Plague of Darknes, when all Egypt was cover'd with a Darknes which might be felt, it is said, That all the Children of Israel had Light in their Dwellings. (c) And so in the Death of the First-born, the destroying Angel cut off all the eldest Children of the Egyptians in a Night, but a Dog did not move his Tongue against any of the Israelites, that they might know, says God, that I put a Difference between the one and the other. (d) And Josephus assures us, that when the Waters of Nile were turn'd into Blood, which was all the Water they had to drink, tho' it bred the Gripes in the Egyptians, yet it had no ill Taste, or Effect at all upon the Hebrews. (e) See how Religion secures Men even as to this World, and that 'tis worth our while to serve the Lord, tho' there were no Heaven to reward us for it, much more when there is.

5thly, I observe from this History, That Impenitency under the repeated Judgments of God, is Fatal and Destructive. So it was to Pharoah and his Host. The severest Calamities that could well befall them, were sent upon 'em one after another. And tho' they sometimes seem'd to Relent, yet upon the whole they continu'd harden'd in their Sins. And what was the Consequence of this? Israel pass'd over the Red Sea, as upon dry Land, which the Egyptians essaying to do, were drown'd. Pharoah the great harden'd Offender, met with this dreadful Catastrophe, as the punishment of his Oppression and Impenitency. His Host were also destroy'd with him, that is, his Army who were the Executioners of his Revenge and Malice; and 'tis most likely that a great Number of the Egyp-
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(a) Ch. 9. 6. (b) Ib. 26. (c) Ch. 10. 23. (d) Ch. 11. 7.
 (e) Lib. 2. cap. 14.

an Nobility were in this terrible Overthrow, for they seem to be meant by the Servants of *Pharaoh*. And some tell us, that even *Jannes* and *Jambres*, the Magicians who oppos'd *Moses*, and help'd so much to harden *Pharaoh*, perish'd also at this time. So awful is it to fall into the hands of the Living God, and so certain is it, that Impenitent Sinners will finally do so. Vengeance will at last overtake that People, whom Judgments will not awaken.

Sera venit, sed Certa venit, vindicta Deorum.

6thly, The design of all these Things is chiefly to be observed, and that is to bring Honour to God ; To get him a Name, and make him known upon the Earth ; To let it be seen, that he is a Sin-hating and a Sin-revenging God, and to keep up the Belief and Reverence of him in the World. This is the Design upon which He sends Pestilence and Famine, any Distempers or Calamities upon Mankind. It is said, that these things were done, *that Men might know, that there was none like unto the God of Israel ; That He might shew his Power upon Pharaoh, that the Egyptians might know that He was the Lord, yea, that his Name might be declar'd throughout all the Earth.* (a) This was also in part the effect of these Judgments, even on the Egyptians themselves, while they were in the Red Sea encompass'd with the Waters which they saw ready to overwhelm them ; They then cry'd, *Let us fly from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.* (b) And then as for the Israelites, as they had peculiar reason to honour their mighty Deliverer, so they did, tho' not so uniformly and constantly as they ought. It is said Ch. 14. ver. 31. *They feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his Ser-*

(a) Ch. 8. 10. 9. 16. 14. 4. &c. (b) Ch. 14. 25.

want Moses. And the next Chapter is mostly spent in a Song of praise drawn up on purpose, and sung to the Honour of the Mighty God of *Jacob*, for these wonderful Works which he had done. Is God then sending a Destroying Angel to cut off the First-born, or any of the Children, or other Branches in our own or the Families about us? Is He going out in any of his Judgments against us? Let us glorifie Him, and humble our selves under his mighty Hand, cast off hardness of Heart, repent and forsake our Sins, and then we may hope that He will turn away his Wrath lest He should destroy us. He will be glorify'd either by us, or upon us, we should therefore comply with the one, and thereby we may prevent the other.

I am to Speak something now,
 2dly, Concerning the Plague of the Boils and Blains in particular. And this we shall find to be no small Calamity upon this People of *Egypt*, or indeed upon any others where-ever God shall think fit to send it. It do's not, I confess, carry the same awful aspect as the Pestilence, or that which we commonly call the Plague, which some Interpreters tell us, was that which destroy'd all the First-born of *Egypt* in one black and dismal Night. But it is certainly a very great Judgment or Affliction, not very much less than the other, and, as we see by this History, sometimes the fore-runner of it. In the 8th and 9th Verses, we have God's Order given to *Moses* and *Aaron*, about the inflicting of this Plague. And now in the words of my Text, we find it actually inflicted. When God will send a sore Disease to punish a People for their Sins, it shall be done, and there is no preventing it. It has been observ'd already, that God by his Servants *Moses* and *Aaron*, warn'd *Pharaoh* of most of the Plagues he intended to send upon him, that so He might have time to prevent it by Repentance and Reformation. But we don't find he

he did so in this Plague, as neither in the Plague of the Lice, nor in the Plague of the Darkness. Sometimes he brings Calamities upon a sinful Nation suddenly, when they don't think of it, nor expect it. If we won't hearken to such Punishments as we are threatn'd with, and told of beforehand, he'll try what may be done by surprizing us, and coming upon us at unawares. However, *Pharaoh* was not without some intimations of God's Intentions to chastise him in the present Case. We are told here, *that Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh, and sprinkled the Ashes of the Furnace, &c.* They did it before his Face, that he might see 'twas not a natural Disease, if I may call any Distemper so ; but that God sent it in an extraordinary way, for their inhumane treatment of the People of *Israel*. Now in speaking to this fore Affliction which befel the *Egyptians*, and the like to which is now visiting this Nation, I shall briefly consider these four things,

First, The Judgment it self, or the Nature of this Affliction.

2dly, The Way or Manner wherein it was inflicted.

3dly, The Universality of it.

4thly, The Greatness of it.

First, The Judgment it self, or the Nature of this Affliction. It is said, that it was a *Boil, breaking forth with Blains* upon the Bodies of the People. The Sin of their Souls, did now, as it were, break out upon their Bodies in a burning Blister, which made 'em a Torment to themselves. *Josephus* represents it as an inward Ulcer, (a) but whether it lay within or without 'em, it was a Sore upon their Bodies, which they were not a-

(a) *Lib. 2. cap. 14.*

ble to bear. And it is very natural to observe here, that this was a Judgment which touch'd 'em more nearly than any that went before it. They had been plagued with the Water turn'd into Blood, with Lice and Flies swarming about 'em, and with a Murrain which destroy'd their Cattle, none of which could bring 'em to Repentance. And therefore God now falls directly upon their Persons, and smites 'em in their own Bodies with a Disease which was very tormenting. Some perhaps may take this to be the proper Plague or Pestilence; but it is more probable, that that which kill'd the First-born was the real Plague, and God threatens to send the Pestilence afterwards, in case the Boil did not reform them, which shews they were distinct Diseases. See *v. 15. For now I will smite thee and thy People with Pestilence, and thou shalt be cut off from the Earth.* I Suppose, none will from hence infer, that I take this to be in all Circumstances, the same with the Small-pox, which now rages among us: But it did certainly very nearly resemble it, and seems to have been as like it, as any Distemper mention'd in the Book of God, which sufficiently justifies our making this Application of it.

2dly. The Way or Manner in which this Judgment was inflicted. This is set down in these words; *They took Ashes of the Furnace, and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses sprinkled it up toward Heaven, and it became a Boil.* Scripture tells us, that the Egyptians afflicted the Israelites, as in an Iron Furnace, *Deut. 4. 20. Jer. 11. 4.* And now the Justice of Heaven turns the Furnace into a Torment to them: As is Men's Sin, so sometimes is their Punishment. Observe here, the Matter of some of these Plagues was taken from the Earth, of some from the Water, and of some from the Air, and this was taken from the Fire, to let us see

see, that there is not an Element, but God can make a Plague to Mankind. The same Elements which make up our Bodily Constitution, can destroy it when he pleases. How far the Ashes taken from the Furnace, might afford the Matter of this Punishment, I shall not determine ; nor whether the power of God might not multiply and heat them, when they were gone out of the Hand of *Moses*, so that falling upon the Bodies of this People, they might produce the Inflammation which afflicted them. It is sufficient to our present Purpose, if they had the nature of a Sign, to denote what sort of Punishment they were now to suffer. Nor can we tell whether at the sprinkling of these Ashes, God might not raise some other Dust in the Air, which he might inflame, and thereby bring forth the fiery Scab with which they were afflicted. It is said, that *Moses* sprinkled the Ashes *toward Heaven* ; and this was plainly to let them see, that it was God who sent this Judgment upon them. And so in all other the like Diseases, we may ask the Question, *Can there be Evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it ?* Amos 3. 6. As sure as Sin is the Cause, so sure it is that God is the Author of 'em. Sometimes indeed an Angel may be the Agent or Instrument of bringing Distempers upon the World, as in the case of those who worship the Beast, Rev. 16. 2. Nay, sometimes Satan himself may be imploy'd in inflicting Bodily Diseases, as in the case of *Job*, which will be again after mention'd : But the superior Agent, the principal Author, is the blessed God, who *killeth, as well as maketh alive*, 1 Sam. 2. 6. In such a case therefore, we are to look not only to the Rod or the Affliction itself, but to a God who hath appointed it ; to him who has all power both in Heaven and Earth, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him, both in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the

the Earth: And if our Thoughts are fix'd only upon Dust and Ashes, the visible immediate Cause of our Afflictions, we are culpably neglectful of him who sits at the Helm, and is chiefly concern'd in all our Calamities. We ought above all, to acknowledge his Providence in 'em, to adore his Power, Wisdom and Justice, and to be humbled under his mighty Hand, by which they do, and without which they could not befall us.

3ly, The Universality of this Judicial Distemper. This was an Epidemical Disease, which spread thro' the whole Kingdom of *Egypt*, so that none but the *Israelites* escap'd it. They were the peculiar Care of Providence at this Time. And as it is expressly declar'd, that they were deliver'd from the other Plagues; so it is clearly intimated, that they were preserv'd from this. It is said, That *the Boil was upon the Magicians, and upon all the Egyptians*, universally upon them, but upon no others. We are told here, That *the Magicians could not stand before Moses, because of the Boil; for it was upon them*, as well as the rest of the People. They had greatly contributed to the hardening of *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians*; Which is a very awful Consideration, that Men devoted to the Service of Religion (as these were, not only what I hinted before, the Wise Men, but the very Priests of *Egypt*) should do all they could for the sake of a worldly Interest to hinder and destroy it. They were, in a word, not only concern'd in the Nation's Sins, but were Ringleaders in the Iniquities of the Times. And therefore 'twas fit, they should feel the Marks of God's Hand and Displeasure. And this was a remarkable Rebuke upon them for their Confidence in opposing *Moses*, as they had but lately done. They pretended to turn Water into Blood, and to create Frogs as well as He; Wherein, whether they wrought real Miracles or no, I shall

shall not dispute. But now they could not so much as avoid the Effects of His Power upon their own Persons : So that, as the Apostle observes, *(a) Their Folly was manifest unto all Men.* They could not stand before Him ; This may denote, that they were now once more convinc'd by Him. They had before acknowledg'd, *This is the Finger of God :* And now again, they could not but own, That the Prophet and Servant of the Lord was too hard for them. Happy for them, if this had prov'd a thorough Change and Conversion : And happy would it be for Many, who are sick of the Boil in our Day, if in that Sense they could not stand before it ; if they were convinc'd of their Sins, and brought to a Saving Repentance for 'em. Some such Instances we hope there may be, and that the Grace of God do's sometimes set in so, as to turn the Sickness of the Body into Health and Soundness to the Soul. Would to God, they were more Common ! We might then look upon our Calamity, to be one of our Greatest Blessings. Nor was this Disease confin'd to the Greatest Sinners, but spread thro' all Ranks and Degrees of Men. The Sins which they were now punish'd for, were National ; and therefore the Punishment inflicted for 'em must be National too. Epidemical Crimes if long persisted in, will bring down Epidemical Diseases. And when such Distempers are diffus'd among the main Body of a People, it certainly concerns them to reflect upon, and to be humbled for the common Sins which they have committed. O that we of this afflicted Nation, may do so at this Time ! Finally, My Text asserts, That the Boil broke forth in Blains upon Man and upon Beast. God had lately destroy'd great

(a) 2 Tim. 3. 9.

Numbers of the *Egyptian Cattle* by a Murrain, and their not being soften'd by that Plague, justly provok'd Him to smite the Rest with this of the Boils and Blains. And here we may see the deplorable Effects of Sin; how fatal it is, not only to Man, but to his Dependants, and almost all that has any Relation to Him. God curs'd the Ground for the Sin of our First-Parents (a). And here the Beasts of the Field are curs'd for the Iniquities of a Provoking People. This the Psalmist observes also, (b) *He turneth Rivers into a Wilderness, and the Water-springs into dry Ground: A Fruitful Land into Barrenness, for the Iniquities of them that dwell therein.* For the Encouragement of Religion, God will make the Earth to help the Woman; But for the Terror of the Ungodly, he'll make the same Earth to bring forth Briars and Thorns, and curse the Blessings it bears for the Use of Man.

4^{thly}, We are to consider the Greatness of this Affliction; and that will appear from these five Considerations.

1st, That it is sent by God as an extraordinary Punishment for the Sins of Men. Health of Body is one of the greatest Mercies belonging to this World, which made the Apostle (c) pray for his beloved Gaius, that *His Body might be in Health and prosper, even as his Soul prosper'd.* When a People therefore are come to an aggravated height of sinning, when God will severely chastise 'em for their Iniquities, when no antecedent Warnings and Severities will reform 'em; He can scarce take a more effectual Method to shew his Resentment of their Sins, than by spreading a Disease amongst them, which shall deprive 'em, either of their very Lives, or of the Comfort of 'em. And as Diseases in general, so this in par-

(a) Gen. 3. 17.

(b) Ps. 107. 33, 34.

(c) 3 Jo. 2.

ticular, is God's Scourge to chastise and correct us. When God would make *Job* an Instance of more than ordinary Affliction, He smites his Body as well as his Estate; and the Distemper he smote him with, was almost the same with this which we are now speaking of. (d) *Satan went forth from the Presence of the Lord, and smote Job, that is, the Devil, by God's Direction or Permission, (for there is oftentimes the Hand of Satan as well as of God in such Distempers) smote him, with sore Boils from the Sole of his Foot unto his Crown, and he took him a Potsherd to scrape him withal, and he sat down among the Ashes, that is, mourn'd and lamented himself in Dust and Ashes.* Sickness, tho' it may happen to a religious Person, yet is a heavy Affliction; and the Sickness of the Boil is one of the most Afflictive of all others. It may befall a *Job*, one of the best of Men; but when it does so, it marks him out for a Man under God's sore Displeasure. For the same Reason, this Disease was threatn'd to the People of *Israel* as their Punishment, if they should prove rebellious and disobedient. *The Lord shall smite thee with the Botch of Egypt, and with the Emerods and with the Scab, and with the Itch, whereof thou canst not be healed, Deut. 28. 27.* The *Israelites* were protected from this Plague of the Boils and Blains when it fell upon the *Egyptians*. But afterwards says, that God who now so wonderfully preserv'd 'em, If thou rebel against me, if thou wilt not hearken to my Voice, to do all the Commandments which I command thee this Day; as I will curse thee a thousand Ways besides, so I will torment thee with the very same Distemper I sent upon *Pharaoh* and his People for their Iniquities. And thus it is also denounc'd as one of the Vials of the Wrath of God, which should be poured out upon the Earth,

(d) *Job 1. 7. 8.*

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when the Sins of Men should become exceeding high and provoking. Rev. 16. 2. *The first Angel went and poured out his Vial upon the Earth, and there fell a noisome and grievous Sore upon the Men, which had the Mark of the Beast, and upon them which worship'd his Image.* Grievous Sinners shall be grievously tormented. They have a Spot upon their Souls, and that shall be punish'd with a Sore upon their Bodies.

2dly, That this Distemper must be no small Calamity appears also from the Painfulness of it. They that have it are a Torment to themselves. It is a Sore upon the Body, which puts 'em to a great deal of Pain and Uneasiness. And it is no wonder that it should do so, when the Disease lies in a violent Inflammation, and that joyn'd with a Swelling; so that there is a fiery Scab or Pustle, spread all over the Patient. It is call'd, (e) *an evil and malignant Ulcer.* 'Tis an angry Tumour or Eruption, which cannot but make People restless, as we commonly find it does. The Malignity of the Distemper must make it painful to the distemper'd Person. And that which helps to increase the Torment, is, the itching Humour which attends it, which yet cannot be satisfy'd because of the Soreness of it. The burning Scab or Blister which was upon their Bodies, strongly dispos'd this miserable People to scratch themselves, and yet they dar'd not do it, lest the Remedy prove worse than the Disease. We may observe something of this also in the Case of *Job*, who scrap'd himself with a Potsheard, to allay the Itching which he had about him, at this Time. And that thus it frequently is in the Disease which is so universally spread in this Kingdom, I need not tell you: So that it is really a Kind

(e) Rev. 16. 2. ἑλκὺς κακὴ καὶ πονηρὴ.

of little Plague almost wherever it comes ; and they who have not a Sense of Religion may be tempted by it to great Impatience ; as it is said, *They blasphemed the God of Heaven, because of their Pains, and their Sores, and repented not of their Deeds,* Rev. 16. 11.

3dly, The afflictive Nature of this Disease, appears also from the Noisomness of it. Those who are under it, are not only a Torment to themselves, but to those that are about 'em. They are a Spectacle to every Body that comes near 'em to gaze at and admire. How strangely is the Face or Countenance of the sick Person alter'd, as long as this Distemper is prevailing upon him ; not to mention the Change which often remains after, and that sometimes as long as he lives ? What an offensive Smell also does the Body cast forth, so that the dearest Friends can scarce bear the Room which is infected with it ? Nay, the Patient is scarce able to endure himself. This was one Circumstance which mightily aggravated *Job's* Affliction, and made it very uneasy to him. His Distemper was so noisome and offensive to the Eye and Smell of his Friends, that it made 'em almost quite forsake him, as he elegantly describes it, Chap. 19. 13 to 22. *He hath put my Brethren far from me, and mine Acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My Kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar Friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my House, and my Maids count me for a Stranger : I am an Alien in their Sight. I called my Servant, and he gave me no Answer, I intreated him with my Mouth. My Breath is strange to my Wife, tho' I intreated for the Childrens sake, of my own Body. Yea young Children despis'd me, I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward Friends abhorred me ; and they whom I loved are turned against me. My Bone cleaveth to my Skin and to my Flesh, and I am escaped with*

with the Skin of my Teeth. Have Pity upon me, have Pity upon me, O ye my Friends, for the Hand of God hath touched me. It was this also which render'd David's Distemper very uneasie to him; My Wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my Foolishness: For my Loyns are filled with a loathsome Disease; and there is no Soundness in my Flesh. My Lovers, and my Friends stand aloof from my Sore; and my Kinsmen stand afar off, Ps. 38. 5, 7, 11. So that here are several unhappy Circumstances, which concur in this and the like bodily Diseases. They cast forth a Scent which is odious to the Person infected with 'em, and they are offensive both to the Sight and Smell of their Friends about 'em: So that they are in danger of being forsaken by all, but such whose Charity inclines 'em to come in to their Relief and Assistance.

4thly, This Distemper is render'd the more afflictive, by the Infection which attends it. 'Tis of such a contagious Nature, as keeps away all who have not pass'd thro' it already: So that upon this, as well as the foremention'd Account, the Person who is under it, must often be depriv'd of the Conversation and Assistance of some of his dearest Friends and Relations. He must either part with them, or expose them to the Hazard of their Lives, either of which must be very grievous, if he has any real Affection to them. Nor can the very Thoughts of his being smitten with a catching Distemper, and such as makes the rest of the World afraid of him, be otherwise than deeply wounding and afflictive. It raises a Horror in the Mind, and is apt to make the Person who is thus stricken loath, and be afraid of himself too.

5thly, It is also a Disease which frequently proves mortal; and upon that account must be awful and affecting. *Moses* indeed does not mention it in this History; but *Josephus* tells us, that it was an Ulcer, which carry'd off the People in vast Numbers (f).

And when God threatn'd it to the *Israelites*, he call'd it a Distemper *whereof they could not be healed*, in that fore-mention'd Place, *Deut. 28. 27.* read also *ver. 35* of that Chap. *The Lord shall smite thee in the Knees and in the Legs, with a sore Botch, which cannot be healed, from the Sole of thy Foot to the Top of thy Head.* Not but that this Disease was curable in itself; but God declar'd it should not be so to them, if they apostatiz'd from him. And how many precious Lives are cut off by the like fatal Distemper in almost every place where it spreads and prevails? Some Hundreds have dy'd of it in this City within but a few Months past. And many Thousands have gone down to the Grave by the Stroke of this Destroying Angel in this Kingdom, besides such as have dy'd by the same fatal Hand in the Nations about us. Nor has it prov'd Fatal only to the Meanest of the People, but many Princes and Nobles have lost their Lives by it in the space of a single Year. The late Vacancy in the Imperial Throne was owing to this Distemper. And this was that which depriv'd a Neighbouring Monarch of the Heir to his Crown and Dignity. Nor may we forget the justly lamented Loss of our own Excellent *Q. Mary*, who dy'd of the same Distemper not many Years ago. So that when God will have it so, this Disease shall be cruel as the Grave it self, that will spare none, but High and Low, Rich and Poor, Honourable and Dishonourable, must submit to it, and they shall lie down alike in the Dust, and the Worms shall cover them. It is owing to the great Goodness of God, and under Him to the late Improvements in Physick, that so many escape, more than formerly were wont to do so. But yet, there is no small Hazard of Life to be sure where it lights, and they who have observ'd it the most narrowly, do, I think, generally agree, that the *Small-Pox* has scarce ever been so Fatal as now these thirty or forty Years. Briefly, we may apply to this,

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what the Apostle speaks upon another Occasion, *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (a).* Many are Weak and Sickly, this Disease not seldom leaving vitious Humours and such Corruptions behind it, as expose to Fevers, Consumptions, and other Mortal Diseases. And thus many are first Sickly, and then sleep thro' its malevolent Nature and Effects. Many are immediately cut off by it, and as many Languish out all their Days; So many are Kill'd by even long after they seem to be heal'd and cur'd of it: All which clearly demonstrates that the Hand of God is upon that Nation where this Distemper prevails. So that it may fitly take up the Lamentation of holy Job, but now recited, *Have pity upon me, Have pity upon me, O ye, my Friends, for the Hand of God hath touched me.*

I shall apply this Discourse in these four Particulars.

First, This calls aloud both to those who have, and those who have not had the Distemper which now rages among us. It is easy to observe by the spotted Faces which appear in our Streets and Congregations, that not a few have got over this Disease. Now such ought to be thankful for their Deliverance, whereby they have escaped a Danger so very great. Nor is it the least considerable Circumstance in their Case to afford cause of Thankfulness, that they have past the Distemper which is seldom repeated. There is no absolute Security indeed that it shall not be so, some having had it more than once: But 'tis own'd, that it do's not usually return upon the same Persons, and therefore a Recovery from it is the greater Mercy. And this I speak not only to those who have escap'd it themselves, but who have had dear Relations delivered from it. The deliverance of your Husbands, Wives, Children, and other Relatives, ought to be regarded as a Mercy to you. And then as for those

(a) 1 Cor. 11. 30.

who have never yet had this Distemper, I would not put them in mind of their Danger to frighten them, being sensible, that the Small-pox often comes by a Fright, as well as by Infection. But I would mind them of it, that they may prepare for it. And surely, your Danger is great, when you are now more than commonly surrounded with a Distemper which is so Infectious and Mortal at the same time. Nor is it an inconsiderable Circumstance, that Persons frequently die in it, in a sudden and surprizing manner. How many have been in the Thoughts, not only of their surrounding Friends, but of their Physicians too, in a hopeful way of Recovery, nay, past Danger; and yet by a sudden turn in their Constitutions, have in a few Hours or Moments breath'd their last? And will you not then take care to be always ready? O Pray, and Hear, and Read, and Meditate, that you may get Oil into your Vessels, make your Peace with God, and secure your Interest in Christ and his everlasting Covenant. You may indeed escape this Distemper, or be restor'd from it; the same Providence which has preserv'd you hitherto, can do so still. But 'tis more than possible, you may not only fall into it, but fall by it; and therefore it highly concerns you to be always upon your Watch.

2dly, Let us of this Nation be thankful, that we are not in the Case which some others have been brought into for their Sins. How many Plagues did an angry God inflict upon *Egypt*? But, how many Mercies has he show'd down upon us? We have but one of these Plagues very visible upon us at this time, the Plague of the Boils and Blains. And shall we not be thankful for such distinguishing Goodness? What a dreadful Pestilence has rag'd this Summer, and do's so still in a violent manner, in *Denmark* and the parts adjacent? And shall we not be thankful that it is not as violent among us? Surely, we can pretend no more Merit than our Neighbours about us. May we not say, we have an *Egyptian*

Egyptian Spirit among us, and therefore deserve the *Egyptian* Plagues? Is there not a Spirit of Oppression and Persecution too visible in almost all Parties in this divided Kingdom? Indeed we have also too much of the *Hebrew* Spirit, in perpetual murmuring against God, in complaining against those who have been, as *Moses* to the *Israelites*, our Deliverers, who have saved us from the Hands of them that hated us; and in longing to return to *Egypt* from whence we have been so wonderfully deliver'd. These are melancholy Tokens, and the worse our Temper is, the more reason we have to bless God that we are not in a worse Condition.

3dly, Let us carefully improve the Providence we are at present under. We are under the Hand of God, as well as the *Egyptians*, who is correcting us with a Distemper with which he visited them for their Sins. Let us not make the same ill Improvement of ours, as they did of their Affliction. It is said in the Verse immediately after my Text, that *the Lord harden'd the Heart of Pharaoh, so that he hearken'd not* to this Call of Providence, which sounded so loudly in his Ears. He had before harden'd himself, and now God in Judgment harden'd him for it. Should this be the case of *Great-Britain*, it would be worse than if the Plague it self were upon us. Let us therefore be soften'd under the Hand of God: Let us own Him, let us justify Him, let us turn to Him, and let us resolve to carry it dutifully towards Him. This will be the best use we can make of this Dispensation.

4thly, and Lastly, Let us strive to prevent further Judgments and Calamities from falling upon us. When God would encourage his People to be Obedient, He promises, *I will put none of those Diseases upon thee, which I brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that healeth thee*, *Exod. 15. 26*. But when he would discourage them from Disobedience, He threatens, *I will bring seven times more Plagues upon you, according to your Sins*, *Lev. 26. 21*. Let us act then

as an obedient People, that we may avoid the Curse, and obtain the Blessing. I will only mind you of two Things, one is, what I before hinted, that this Plague of the Boils, was succeeded by the proper Pestilence among the People of *Egypt*. God threaten'd in this very Chapter, Verses 14, 15. That if they did not hearken to this Providence, he wou'd *send all his Plagues, and smite them with the Pestilence*, which was accordingly fulfilled in the Death of the First-born. The other is, that we have the greater reason to fear, lest the Small-pox be attended with the Plague amongst us, partly, because this Nation was scarce ever known to be so long as five and forty Years without a Plague till now. And partly because, the last which afflicted us, was introduc'd by the Small-pox raging before it in the same Fury and Violence, it do's at this Day; but above all, because we certainly deserve it. Well! we may say as *Pharaoh*, we have Sinned, we and the rest of this People are wicked. But let us when God is visiting us for our Sins, hear and fear, and do no more so Wickedly. Let God be glorify'd by us, as well as among us, so we may hope, we shall not be Consumed, because his Compassions fail not. To conclude, Let us so improve the Patience, that we may avert the Judgments of God. I hope we are not yet devoted to Ruin, as *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians* were; but that God waits to be Gracious. Let us therefore in this our Day, remember the things which belong to our Peace, which will be the most effectual Method to remove the Calamities we Feel, and prevent the Judgments we Fear. Nothing but Iniquity can be our Ruin, but Hardness and Impenitency, 'tis to be fear'd, will be so, if we give way to it. Let us therefore humble our selves under the mighty Hand of God, rent our Hearts, and not our Garments, and turn unto the Lord our God, for he is Merciful and Gracious, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil.

